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ABSTRACT

Four television stations were studied and potential audiences surveyed in Los Angeles, California, to explore the extent of ethnic television, determine how its content reflects community influence, and examine viewers' attitudes toward ethnic television broadcasting. Fourteen ethnic groups were represented in ethnic television during the year-long period of the study, with Spanish programs comprising the majority of ethnic broadcasts. Programs were imported from the native countries of specific ethnic groups or developed locally under the responsibility of ethnic consultants or private groups. The multiethnic orientation of stations was derived from station policy influenced by economic and cultural considerations. Commercial support, community interest, and stations' scheduling demands affected the amount and content of broadcasts. Programs incorporated local affairs to promote ethnic involvement in broadcasts. Among ethnic group members interviewed, a third had watched programs designed for their groups, but less than three percent preferred such programming over general television fare. However, there appeared to be a demand for more ethnic programs. The data suggest that smaller scale television operations are more likely to involve the community. It is predicted that changes in the nature of ethnicity on television will continue with developments in general television production. (Author/MJL)

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Community Involvement in Ethnic Television

A paper presented at the American Education Research Association annual meeting on March 19-24, 1982 in New York.

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Ethnic television, programming specifically broadcast for ethnic groups in a community, is a form of television that has shown a great deal of growth in the past few years in such cities as Los Angeles, Toronto, and New York in North America and in many other nations. For educators and those interested in the social foundations of change in a community, studying ethnic television in one's community may serve as a way of examining intra- and interethnic relations, informal ethnic education, and changing perspectives on ethnicity.

This paper is designed to overview factors that affect the amount of community involvement in ethnic television by describing their influences on the particular case of Los Angeles. Through interviews with local ethnic broadcasters and through a survey of their potential audiences, this study examines some of the motivations and goals of ethnic television broadcasting. This paper begins with descriptions of the extent of ethnic television in Los Angeles and how its content reflects community influence on the stations. In the final section of this report, the results of a survey of a segment of the potential audiences in Los Angeles suggest the viewers' attitudes and participation in ethnic television broadcasting. The following review is designed to frame the subsequent sections within the changing nature of ethnicity and media

in this decade.

Ethnicity and media in the 1980s

There has been a gradual change in perspectives on ethnicity, television production, content, and audience response in the last decade. Jeffres and Hur (1980), Forbes (1974), and Montenegro (1976) have suggested that there are within-group differences in the expression of ethnicity and warn against considering ethnic groups as being homogeneous. Similarly, Cantor (1979) and Cheng (1976) find that television production depends on several situational factors involving the personalities of the individuals on the production team and societal forces. Content analyses of television messages have focused on quantitative measures (U.S. Commission on Civil Rights, 1977 and 1979), role portrayals (Greenberg and Baptista-Fernandez, 1980), and then on the context of the messages as they relate to other media and cultural situations (Adler, 1975; Newcomb, 1979). Audience research has also evolved from studies of viewing habits of ethnic groups (Greenberg and Dervin, 1970) and examinations of how other factors might interact with these preferences (Frank and Greenberg, 1980) to discuss within ethnic group differences in media habits (Allen, 1981; Lopez et. al. , 1973).

Dorr (1978) discusses the interactive establishment of

ethnic roles in today's society. In agreement with Berger and Luckmann (1966) that individuals together create their own social roles and the social order, Dorr suggests that further research should "examine the interaction of minority groups identification, television viewing, and other socialization influences or experiences."

This paper examines how these four strands of research on ethnicity, television production, content, and audience responses may shed some light on the community involvement in ethnic expression in the media. In an earlier work (Stoloff, 1981), I examine how the expression of ethnicity on television is changing in Los Angeles following the doubling of the amount of non-English language programming during 1980. I find that television production for ethnic audiences depends on the cooperation of individuals who have differing economic, philosophical, and social motivations for their efforts. The content of these television programs and the responses of their audiences demonstrate the ever-changing forces that interact to form an individual's and a community's conceptions of ethnicity and communications.

These themes are further explored in this review of the stations' influence on ethnic television production, its content and how it reflects community involvement, and the general audience response to ethnic television in Los

Angeles. Extent of ethnic television in this one community is described in the next section.

Ethnic television and societal influences on stations

As a measure of the amount of ethnic television for each language group being broadcast in Los Angeles from August 1980 to August 1981, the author categorized programming on four stations -- KMEX-TV, channel 34; KWHY-TV, channel 22; KBSC-TV, channel 52; and KSCI-TV, channel 18. These four stations all broadcast on UHF over eighteen hours of non-English language television per week (approximately one percent of the total broadcast time in Los Angeles) during the period of this study. (Other station in Los Angeles, including KTBN-TV, channel 40 with 5.5 hours a week of Spanish-language television; KNXT-TV, channel 2, and KNBC-TV, channel 4, with 1.5 hours of Spanish-language television each a week; and KABC-TV, channel 7, with a half hour of Black programming a week, are excluded from detailed study because these programs do not represent a recurrent factor in the stations' over-all broadcast policy.) Local television listings and the stations' program guides were used in these categorizations.

Programming in Spanish made up between 77 and 86 percent of the total amount of ethnic television during the period of this study, August 1980 to August 1981, ranging from

208.5 hours in August 1980 to a peak of 299.5 hours in April 1981. Spanish-language television represented approximately 15 percent of the total television broadcast to the Los Angeles metropolitan community.

Thirteen other groups were represented within ethnic television at one time during the period of the study. Together, these groups broadcast between 44.5 hours to 57.5 hours a week, or about 3 percent of the total television broadcast in Los Angeles. Japanese programs were broadcast on KSCI for an average of twelve hours a week and on KWHY for an average of five hours a week. Korean programs were aired on KSCI for nine hours a week and on KWHY for six hours a week. Chinese programs were broadcast for about four hours and five hours a week on KSCI and KWHY respectively. Jewish programs were aired about one hour a week on KSCI and KWHY and until February 1981 for a half-hour on KBSC. One-half hour of Russian was broadcast on KSCI each week, an hour of Armenian on KWHY, and one-half hour a week of Black programming on KABC-TV-channel 7. One hour a week of German was replaced by one hour of Italian on KWHY in April 1981. On KSCI, an hour of Persian appeared in April 1981, an hour of Hindi was broadcast until October 1980, and a half-hour of Thai programming was aired in February 1981. A Pilipino program aired on KWHY for one-hour a week until March 1981, on KSCI during December 1980

to February 1981, and on KBSC starting April for one hour and a half. The table below ~~Table 2~~ outlines these number of hours of ethnic television for each of these ethnic groups by the stations they appeared on.

Ethnic television on four stations in Los Angeles

(August 1980 to August 1981)

number of hours of ethnic television during the sample week

STATIONS	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)	(6)	(7)
KMEX(34)							
Spanish	168.0	168.0	168.0	168.0	168.0	168.0	168.0
KWHY(22)							
Japanese	12.0	11.5	9.0	12.5	13.0	13.5	11.5
Chinese	6.0	5.0	5.0	5.0	4.0	4.0	4.0
Jewish	1.0	1.0	1.0	1.0	1.0	1.0	1.0
Armenian	1.0	1.0	1.0	1.0	1.0	1.0	1.0
Pilipino	1.0	1.0	1.0	1.5	1.5	---	---
German	1.0	1.0	---	1.0	---	---	---
Italian	---	---	---	1.0	1.0	1.0	1.0
KBSC(52)							
Spanish	---	64.0	65.5	65.5	66.0	66.0	66.5
Jewish	1.0	1.0	0.5	0.5	---	---	---
Pilipino	---	---	---	---	---	1.5	1.5

KSCI (18)							
Spanish	45.5	51.0	46.5	53.0	60.0	40.5	34.0
Japanese	12.0	11.5	19.0	12.5	13.0	13.5	11.5
Korean	9.5	10.5	8.0	9.0	9.0	9.5	8.5
Chinese	6.0	4.0	3.5	5.5	2.0	2.0	2.5
Jewish	1.0	1.0	1.0	3.5	1.0	1.0	1.0
Russian	0.5	0.5	0.5	0.5	0.5	0.5	0.5
Hindi	1.0	1.5	---	---	---	---	---
Pilipino	---	---	1.0	1.0	---	---	---
Persian	---	---	0.5	---	0.5	1.0	1.0
Thai	---	---	---	0.5	---	---	---
Black	---	---	---	---	---	---	1.0
TOTAL	266.5	333.5	331.0	343.5	341.5	324.0	314.5
	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)	(6)	(7)

Sources

Los Angeles Times, Television Times (1) August 24-30, 1980, (2) October 26-November 1, 1980; (3) December 28, 1980 to January 3, 1980; (4) February 22-28, 1980; (5) April 26-May 2, 1981; (6) June 28-July 4, 1981; (7) August 23-29, 1981.

From this table, the reader may note that KMEX and KBSC broadcast primarily Spanish-language television. KMEX, as a flagship station of the Spanish International Network, began

broadcasting continously in the summer of 1980. It relies to a large extent on programming from Mexico's largest commercial network, Televisa, tha major producer of Spanish-language programming in Latin America. KBSC, a sister station of WNJU-TV in New York, relies heavily on programming from Puerto Rico and several Latin American nations. Its Spanish-language programming is limited because its evening hours are leased to a pay television service, ON-TV. KMEX and KBSC broadcast locally produced public affairs and community-oriented programs for 15 hours and 3.5 hours a week respectively as a service to their audiences.

KWHY and KSCI broadcast to a larger number of ethnic audiences. These two stations, and KBSC for Jewish and Pilipino programs, make use of either a system of broadcast association, when ethnic consultants are hired as part-time employees of the stations, sell advertising, and import programming from their homelands and package local shows for a share of the revenues these programs bring, or time brokerage, when studio time is rented by a group of individuals who are responsible for the program.

The multiethnic aspect of these stations result from two different motivations. In 1971, KWHY became the first station in the continental United States to have a policy

encouraging ethnic broadcasting. KWHY also leases its evening hours to a pay-television service, SelecTV, and broadcasts financial news during weekday mornings and afternoons. Ethnic television on KWHY is limited to early evenings and Sunday mornings. Economic considerations greatly influence this station's broadcasting policy, as they do for all four of these stations.

The management at KSCI claims additional motivations for broadcasting ethnic television. KSCI is owned and operated by Global Television, a non-profit organization whose philosophy is linked to Transcendental Meditation. Ethnic television is considered to be an important medium of expression for ethnic groups and for cultural pluralism in a community. Interethnic tensions will decrease, acoording to the station's philosophy, if groups are allowed to express themsleves freely.

Changes in the amount of ethnic television on these stations represent shifts in the communities that these programs serve and in the stations' policy. For example, Chinese programming changed during the year period of this study as broadcasters on KWHY began to get more advertising from Mandarin-speaking businesses. Initially, Chinese news programming on KWHY had broadcast bilingually, in alternating segments of Cantonese and Mandarin. Most of

KWHY's programming is now imported from Taiwan, while KSCI, which attempts to attract the smaller Cantonese-speaking population, imports programming from Hong Kong. Thai and Hindi broadcasters could not find commercial backing for their programs while, after an initial trial, the growing Persian community accepted and supported a weekly program. Pilipino programming moved from KWHY to KSCI to KBSC as commercial rates for time brokerage and schedules changed on these stations. A three week attempt at a bilingual Hebrew-English television program on KSCI was hindered by lack of community support and scheduling demands by the station. The amount of Spanish-language television on KSCI also changed as the station added more philosophical programming at the expense of Spanish-language programs that could not find sponsors.

Changes in programming on these four stations seem to result from the availability of television productions, the stations' broadcast policies and interests in attracting certain ethnic audiences, and the interests of individuals in the community in using television to reach out to their ethnic group. The nature of the programs, the types of themes that are discussed, and the community involvement and response are also important issues in the study of the content of ethnic television.

There are ethnic television programs that do represent some direct community involvement. KMEX, KBSC, and KSCI feature public affairs programming in Spanish based in the local communities they serve with station staff members interviewing representatives of local organizations and events. KMEX and KBSC also have daily news programs that feature local news. KSCI offers weekly Spanish-language variety programs set in various local parks or recreation centers that attempt to draw community paricipation.

The other ethnic television also involve their audience by incorporating local community affairs in their broadcasts to varying extents. The Japanese, Chinese, Korean, and Pilipino programmers import a great deal of their programming and add local commercials and short news programs with local and home country news. The Persian, Italian, Russian, Armenian, and Jewish programs, which are produced for the most part in Los Angeles, make use of interviews with local celebrities, artists, and religious leaders, and the recording of local events for much of their broadcasts. These programs also offer political discussions and religious/cultural items as a service to their community. The Persian programs, for example, review headlines and editorials from local Persian newspapers. These programs also offer locally produced entertainment, including short skits on adjusting to American life and

political and social issues, and local musicians and singers. The Italian hour often tapes in local restaurants or dances and interviews local business people. The Russian weekly half-hour is a religious program that mixes sings, scriptures, and sermons, while the Armenian hour has a religious discussion, interviews on political events, and songs by children and entertainers. The two Jewish hour-long programs each week combine interviews with local political leaders and entertainers with news of the local community and of Israel. One-half of one of these programs is done entirely in Hebrew for the local Israeli community.

One of the general managers of the stations broadcasting ethnic television in Los Angeles, Villaneuva at KMEX-TV, channel 34, suggested a model for the the growth of ethnic television in a community (during an interview on April 22, 1981). Villaneuva posits that ethnic television first begins as a project of an individual or a small group of individuals who are interested in communicating with their local community, to sell local advertisements and broadcast local events. These small-scale enterpreneurs usually have to buy station time on the smaller stations in a community when the studio rates are lowest -- during the fringe hours of early Sunday and weekdays. If these programs gather an audience, these programmers may expand their broadcasts to a daily schedule during a second phase of this model of

development. From a daily schedule to controlling the entire broadcast schedule of a station requires a full-time staff, a great deal of capital, and a large audience for support. As the station grows in the third phase of Villaneuva's model, programmers look towards ethnic markets beyond their broadcast range by incorporating communications satellites, mobile news equipment, and other advanced technologies.

Most of the Spanish-language broadcasting in Los Angeles falls within the second phases of this model as it makes up a large number of hours on the daily schedules of KMEX, KBSC, and KSCI. The other ethnic television falls in the first phase as these programmers rely on Sunday and fringe hours for broadcasting. These other ethnic television programs, especially the programs that are on for less than a few hours a week, also seem to involve more of the local events and the community. The involvement of the community in ethnic television was examined through a survey described in the next section.

Audience preferences and perceptions and ethnic television

The author directed and participated in the interviews of 370 people on their viewing habits and opinions on ethnic television and those of their families during a Spring 1981

Media Studies course at Small College at California State University, Dominguez Hills (CSUDH). Information on ethnicity, age, sex, occupation, station and programming preferences, and perceived need for ethnic television were collected through this survey of a total of 1047 individuals.

The respondents identified themselves using over thirty national, racial, or ethnic groups that were re-categorized into five global groups. It is hoped that through further research substantial numbers for each of the 30 groups may be maintained to allow for more reliable analyses. Cognizant of the potential of blurring subtle within group differences through this re-categorization, the sample may be desribed as 46.1% Black, 7.5% Mexican-American, 13.7% Asian (Chinese, Japanese, Korean, Thai, Filipino, and Samoan), 8.7% European (French, Italian, Irish, English, German, Scandinavian, Hungarian, Croatian, Swiss, Yugoslav, Austrian, Jewish, and Russian), and 24.0% White. This ethnic mixture approximates the population around the CSUDH campus, located in south-central Los Angeles county and represented 104 different zip-coded neighborhoods. Approximately 14.7% of the sample were born outside of the USA with the majority of these immigrants being from Asia (59% of the Asian representation in the sample) and 25% of both the European and Mexican-American groups in the sample.

About 31% of the sample responded that they have watched ethnic television programming. Among the ethnic groups, 13% of the European audience, 29% of the Black audience, 32% of the White, 33% of the Mexican-American audience, and 40% of the Asian audience had watched this form of television before. There were no significant differences between ethnic television viewers when categorized by work type (ranging from 24% of the skilled workers viewing ethnic television to 34% of the student audience viewing), sex (32% of both the females and the males were viewers), or age (both viewers and non-viewers had a mean age of 30 years). There were differences when the sample was grouped by whether they were foreign-born (44% were ethnic television viewers) and USA-born (28% were viewers).

Ethnic television programs were not considered preferred programming by ethnic group members in this survey. Only 2.6% of the European group, 1.7% of the Asian group, and 0.5% of the Black group preferred ethnic programs. There was no preference for this form of programming among the Mexican-American and White groups in this survey. These small or no percentage of preference proves interesting in light of these audiences' responses to their viewing of minority ethnic television described next.

The respondents were asked to identify ethnic television

programs that they watch. Some of the respondents in the Black audience identified such programming as "Soul Beat", "The Jeffersons", "What's Happenning?", "Sanford and Sons", or "Roots". The Mexican-American and Asian audiences identified programming on UHF stations in Los Angeles, KMEX-TV-channel 34, KSCI-TV-channel 18, KWHY-TV-channel 22, or KBSC-TV-channel 52. The European and White self-identified respondents were generally unable to give specific examples, except for "Holocaust" or some religious programming.

The respondents were asked if they felt there was enough ethnic television programming. Sixty-five percent of the sample (more than twice the percentage that noted that they watched ethnic television) responded that there wasn't enough of such programming. This percentage siginificantly varied among the ethnic audiences ranging from 22% of the White audience responding that there was not enough ethnic television to 63% of the Mexican-American audience, 79% of the European audience, 81% of the Black audience, and 84% of the Asian audience.

Concuring with a study of Spanish-language television in Los Angeles by Lopez et. al. (1973), the foreign-born were more likely to watch ethnic television than those born in the USA. In contrast with this study, though, there were no significant differences between audiences grouped by work

type and the non-viewers and viewers did not significantly differ in age (both with a mean of 30 years).

Implications of these studies

It seems from an overview of each of stations in Los Angeles broadcsting ethnic televsion and brief descriptions of the content of these programs that smaller scale television operations are more likely to involve the community. The programs on for a hour or two a week -- the Armenian, Italian, Jewish, and Persian programs -- were more likely to involve local institutions , newspapers, and events than the longer packaged programming from Japan, Korea, Taiwan, Hong Kong, and Mexico. Villaneuva's model of ethnic television development in a community (from small scale fringe programming to station operation to local and national out-reach programs) suggests that these less developed programs are more likely to reflect local events than the larger stations' operations.

From the audience survey, it seems that although about a third of the sample had watched programming designed specifically for their ethnic group, less than 3% preferred such programming over the general television fare. This may result from the limited amount of ethnic television broadcast on the sometimes inacessible UHF stations. There seems to be some demand for more ethnic programming with 65%

of the sample responding that there currently wasn't enough of such programming being broadcast to the Los Angeles audiences.

It is not hard to predict from this demand that with the growing acceptance of cable television systems by the general audience, the expansion of such television networks as the Spanish International Network, the Black Entertainment Network, and the Jewish Television Network, and the increasing presence of ethnically identifying individuals in television production and research, the nature of ethnicity on television will continue to change for the rest of the decade. How these changes affect ethnicity, television, and society may prove to be one of the salient issues of future research; at least, for those interested in how individuals create their own social reality in a mediated age.

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